



NEWS

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First 2018 Cases of West Nile Virus Disease in a Montgomery County Resident

Norristown, PA (Aug. 29, 2018) – The Montgomery County Office of Public Health (OPH) is currently investigating two probable cases of West Nile Virus (WNV) in humans. The first is a 59-year old resident of Montgomery Township and the second is a 66-year old resident of Lower Merion Township. Both cases are pending confirmation testing through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

There were 16 confirmed human cases of WNV throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 2016. Of that number, two were Montgomery County residents.

OPH and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) mosquito-borne disease surveillance and control programs are seeing higher than usual counts of WNV-infected mosquitos this season throughout our county, and the Commonwealth. Risk of human WNV infection is likely to remain elevated over the next several months.

OPH is targeting areas within the county where disease-carrying mosquitoes could pose a risk to human health for pesticide spraying. OPH will continue to conduct adult mosquito control events throughout the summer season; however, due to the extensive and widespread detection of WNV-infected mosquitoes throughout Montgomery County, some areas may not receive adult mosquito control. Therefore, during this active mosquito season, OPH is reminding residents to take a few simple steps to protect themselves from insect bites and prevent the spread of insect-borne disease.

Important steps include eliminating mosquito breeding areas such as standing water around your home, avoiding outdoor activities during peak mosquito times, wearing protective clothing, and using insect repellent to reduce the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes.

In Pennsylvania, WNV is the most commonly reported locally-acquired arbovirus and is most commonly seen during the months of July through September. Risk continues until the first hard frost. While most human WNV

infections (80 percent) do not produce obvious symptoms, some cases can experience mild flu-like symptoms, which can lead to a more serious condition involving swelling of the brain, muscle convulsions, coma, paralysis and death (neuro-invasive diseases).

Some individuals and groups are at higher risk for severe illness including neuro-invasive disease:

- **People over 60:** People over age 60 are more likely to develop serious symptoms of WNV. Neuro-invasive disease is more likely to occur in patients over 50 years of age or those with compromised immunity.
- **People with certain medical conditions:** These conditions include cancer, hypertension, diabetes, kidney disease, and people who have received organ transplants.
- **Being outside means you are at risk:** The more time you spend outdoors, the greater the chance of being bitten by an infected mosquito. Pay attention to trying to avoid mosquito bites if you spend a lot of time outside, either working or playing.

Below are steps you can take to reduce your risk of contracting WNV:

- Since clothing can help reduce mosquito bites, wear long-sleeves, long pants, and socks when outdoors to help keep mosquitoes away from your skin.
- Use an approved mosquito repellent when outdoors in areas where mosquitoes are active.
- Apply insect repellent sparingly to exposed skin. Follow the label directions carefully. Do NOT apply repellent to the face.
- Apply insect repellents that contain at least 20 percent DEET, Picaridin, Oil of lemon eucalyptus, or other EPA-registered repellents.
- Use permethrin to treat clothing and gear (such as boots, pants, socks, and tents) Permethrin is an insecticide that kills or repels mosquitoes.
- Avoid being outside during dawn and dusk when mosquitos are most active.
- Survey your property and eliminate artificial containers with standing water, such as old tires, cans, bottles, buckets, flowerpots, wheelbarrows or toys and clean those items weekly.
- Use screens on windows and doors. Repair holes in screens to keep mosquitoes outdoors.
- After it rains, empty any plant containers, bird baths, flowerpots, kiddie pools, and pool covers to keep water from collecting in these items.
- Make sure roof gutters drain properly and rooftops are free of standing water.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, outdoor saunas, and hot tubs. Keep them empty and covered if not in use; drain water that collects in pool covers.
- Drill several holes in the bottom of recycling buckets so water can drain from them. Cover trash containers so rain cannot accumulate in them.

For more information on WNV disease please contact OPH Department 610-278-5117 or visit the OPH Web Site:

<http://www.montcopa.org/health>